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Following statement of US views re current Egyptian situation was handed British Embassy today.

VERBATIM TEXT

General Naguib has stated that Egypt cannot agree to the participation of the United States in the proposed negotiations regarding the Suez Canal base. According to the report from the British Ambassador in Cairo, Naguib said that: QTE The Egyptian Government have come to this decision on the grounds that United States participation in the talks from the beginning would be interpreted in Egypt as involving the country in the negotiations for Middle East Defense. This, Egypt is not prepared to contemplate unless and until the question of withdrawal of British troops has been settled UNQTE.

This raises two questions:

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One. Whether the participation of American representatives in the talks should be insisted upon, and

Two. Whether agreement to discuss Middle East Defense shall be made a prerequisite to discussion of other parts of the package proposal.

Mr. Eden has telegraphed the British Embassy in Washington as follows: QTE I propose to instruct HM Ambassador at Cairo to inform the Egyptians that we are not prepared to proceed any further so long as they maintain this

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Drafted by: NEA:JDJernegan:hh

Telegraphic transmission and classification approved by: John D. Jernegan

Clearances: In draft:
: The Secretary
: General Smith
EUR: Mr. Bonbright

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attitude. We must insist that the United States representatives participate from the outset in any talks, and our negotiator must be free to put forward our proposals in their entirety UNQTE.

As has been made clear in previous conversations, the United States Government would not participate in the proposed Anglo-Egyptian negotiations unless there was clear agreement on the part of the Egyptian Government. It seems evident that the Egyptian Prime Minister has definitely rejected the suggestion of American participation. Therefore, the United States does not concur in Mr. Eden's suggestion that Ambassador Stevenson be instructed to insist on United States participation from the outset of the negotiations. In the light of the developments of the past few days, the United States believes that its role must be limited to one of activity behind-the-scenes, to the extent acceptable to both the British and Egyptians. We should, of course, endeavor to be as helpful as possible and would be prepared to join in the formal discussions at any time when that may be desired by the two participants.

The United States Government believes that it would be a great mistake to insist flatly upon discussion of a Middle East Defense Organization simultaneously with discussion of the other four points of the QTE package proposal UNQTE. While recognizing that the five points are in fact interdependent from the British and American point of view, we must also recognize that they are not so linked together in the Egyptian mind. In view of the publicity which has recently tied evacuation to Middle East Defense, it has now become even more difficult for the Egyptian Government to accept a formal linking together

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of the two questions.

It has always been the opinion of the United States Government that the questions of evacuation and future maintenance of the Suez Canal base could, if desired by the Egyptians, be considered first and that after satisfactory tentative agreements have been reached it would then be practicable to broach the question of Middle East Defense. In our view, this need not be an unduly risky procedure since final and binding agreements on evacuation need not be signed until satisfactory understandings had been reached on the other points. In this connection, it is to be noted that the Egyptian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs took pains to assure Ambassador Caffery on March 15 of their pro-Western sympathies and their intention eventually to cooperate in Middle East Defense.

We believe that the best present hope lies in the immediate commencement of conversations between British and Egyptian representatives without insistence by the British Government on prior formal agreement that Middle East Defense must be considered simultaneously with the problem of troop withdrawal and without insistence on public participation by the United States in these discussions.

We are greatly disturbed at the possibility that the present situation will develop into an impasse in which public opinion will prevent either side from making any move toward an understanding. We believe that the longer the delay in initiating the negotiations the greater the danger of such an impasse, which would put matters back into the situation of last year when all progress was held up by the dispute over the title of the King of Egypt. END VERBATIM TEXT

DULLES